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## THESIS

GREECE AND THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE

by

John Fricas

March 1980

Thesis Advisor:

D.P. Burke

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Greece and the Truman Doctrine

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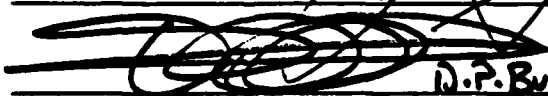
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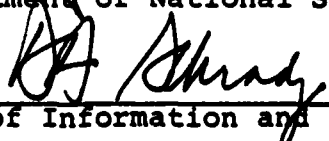
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## ABSTRACT

The Truman Doctrine has generally been perceived as the decisive factor which led to the defeat of the communist insurgency in Greece in 1949. This doctrine is also credited with having stopped the spread of Soviet expansion in Europe and the Balkans. However, available historical data does not support the argument that Greece was saved from communism by U.S. aid and assistance. In fact, current information indicates that the raisons d'etre for this policy were based on misperceptions and the lack of accurate information. Grave doubts about the efficacy of the Truman Doctrine have also been cast by the continued spread of communism beginning with the communist victory in China in 1949 and the Korean War in 1950. This thesis is devoted to determining the real impact of the Truman Doctrine on the Greek civil war (1947-1949). In addition, an attempt is made to divine the importance, effectiveness and meaning of the Truman Doctrine as an American foreign policy.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The United States emerged from the Second World War as the single most powerful nation in the world. It had served as the world arsenal for the wars against Germany and Japan. It had played a direct and significant role in winning the war. Its economy had not been destroyed by the enemy. America possessed the most destructive and awesome military weapon the world had ever known -- the atomic bomb. And yet, the United States did not rule the world. In fact, as time passed, despite its position and power, the United States increasingly became incapable of forcing its will on others and less able to influence certain key political events.

Until World War II, the United States had followed basically an isolationist foreign policy. It had remained aloof from the power politics and Byzantine diplomatic maneuvers of Europe and the rest of the world. Occasionally it had become involved in foreign ventures, but only when it was felt that the basic security of the nation was threatened or vital international interests were at stake. Thus, the United States was involved in the Spanish-American War and World War I. But it always returned to its isolationist posture.

World War II ended America's isolationism. After the war, it became painfully obvious that emerging political forces and the atomic age would not allow the Americans to draw back into their shell to await the next major crisis or conflagration. The quantum leap in technological advances and increased

speed of communications and transportation began to break down the security barrier which had been provided by two oceans. The United States now had a center-stage role in the political drama that was unfolding throughout the world.

The Second World War not only thrust America into an often unwanted role, it also changed many of the basic political structures of the past. International boundary lines were being redrawn and new maps would have to be printed to reflect the many changes that occurred. The Second World War resulted in a basic realignment in the world balance of power. As time passed the world began to gravitate toward a major bipolar balance, with the Soviet Union at one pole and the United States at the other.

The new orientation of the world's political order brought about a period of instability and uncertainty. The world had to adjust to the political realities of the time. As the chaos of war subsided, the world began to cleave along two political and philosophical lines: communism and liberal democracy.

Of all the things that evolved from the Second World War, it was the increased power of the Soviet Union and the spread of communism that threatened the United States the most. It was also communism that was the most enigmatic dilemma for America. Intuitively, many Americans began to believe that communism jeopardized, if not immediately then eventually, the very survival of the state. It was these beliefs and fears that hypothetically led the United States toward the Cold War.

Prior to the end of World War II, when it became apparent that it was only a matter of time before the Third Reich collapsed, and especially after the war, many diverse political groups began to plan for their assumption of power in Europe. It was the eventual and inevitable confrontation of these diverse forces which led first to the cooling, and then to the near severing, of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In the political vacuum and economic chaos caused by the war, the Soviet Union saw an opportunity to further its own goals and ambitions. The United States at the same time was also working for the reestablishment of governments that were in its best interests. Initially the Soviets were very successful in spreading communism and installing regimes of their choosing in some of the areas of Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

The United States was not really prepared for what was happening. The national leadership was not accustomed to international involvement and the nuances of major global power politics. There was no real or clear-cut policy to deal with what was occurring. However, the leaders in Washington and London -- America's major ally -- knew that they had to do something, short of starting another war, to stop the actual and perceived threats being posed by the Russians. Between 1944 and 1947, the United States tried almost on an ad hoc basis to formulate a foreign policy to deal with global political realities and stop the spread of communism. The task of devising a foreign policy was difficult for the

United States because of the lack of a clear American understanding of, or consensus on, what was happening. The problems were compounded by the death of President Roosevelt (April 12, 1945) and the installation of a new administration in Washington, the electoral defeat of British Prime Minister Churchill (July 26, 1945), and the intransigence of Stalin.

In the beginning the United States attempted to deal with the Russians diplomatically and through negotiations. When this failed to achieve the desired results, threats of economic sanctions or the denial of economic assistance were used to get the desired results. The use of economic sanctions and the denial of economic assistance as a political lever also failed. The U.S. Secretary of State tried to use the atomic bomb as a political prod.\* This also failed. The United States finally devised a plan for containment. This scheme appeared to work.

The American containment policy was the first clear-cut

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\*The United States did not directly threaten the Soviets with the atomic bomb; rather U.S. negotiators used it as an implied threat. For example, during the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in London in September, 1945, U.S. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes is reported to have told Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov "if you don't cut out all the stalling and let us get down to work, I am going to pull an atomic bomb out of my hip pocket and let you have it." <sup>1</sup> Gar Alperovitz, in his book Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam, effectively discusses the political and psychological impact of the atomic bomb on the United States and the Soviet Union. In the case of the U.S. the possession of this weapon increased the stiffness of the American bargaining position and reduced its willingness to negotiate. In the case of the Soviets, the American monopoly of nuclear weapons added to their feelings of insecurity and stiffened their resolve -- especially in light of the fact that the Soviets, at that time, believed that the U.S. would probably not use a nuclear weapon against them.

American foreign policy to be developed since the Monroe Doctrine. Its purpose was to "contain" the expansion of Soviet communism and thus reduce the threat to the security of the United States. Containment became the linchpin of American policy and was to remain as such until the advent of detente in the early 1970's.

If one were to select a date for the initiation of this foreign policy, one might select March 12, 1947, the date that President Harry S. Truman addressed the Congress of the United States to ask for military and economic aid to save Greece and Turkey from communism. It was this speech -- which embodied the Truman Doctrine -- that launched the American containment policy. Although President Truman did not mention the Soviet Union in this speech, it was this address which outlined the American program designed to stop the spread of communism. The objectives of the program were clear, when Truman said

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure.

I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their destinies in their own way.

I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes.

. . . . .

The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms.

If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world -and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own nation.<sup>2</sup>

Today, it is widely believed that the Truman Doctrine has outlived its usefulness and is no longer applicable to

contemporary international and American domestic political realities. Nevertheless, it is held generally that without the Truman Doctrine and the U.S. containment policy, plus the massive, concomitant American monetary assistance, Greece would have come under communist domination shortly after the end of World War II. There is, however, ample evidence to indicate that the United States did not save Greece, rather that Greece was "saved" by the Greeks and external events that were beyond the control of America. It can even be argued that the "democratic" forces in Greece did not win the war, it was the communists who lost the war. Thus, the effectiveness of the Truman Doctrine has often been erroneously perceived and its true value and impact often misjudged.

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, will be to examine the impact of the Truman Doctrine on the Greek civil war. The major goal will be to convince the reader that American intervention with military and economic aid, beginning in 1947, was not the decisive factor in this particular war; rather, other events and forces played the predominant roles and ultimately determined the outcome of the conflict. But, let there be no misunderstanding. The value and importance of the Truman Doctrine is not automatically negated because it did not save Greece from communism. Its significance and meaning may lie elsewhere. The reader must be cautioned and understand from the outset that criticism should not be mistaken for condemnation.

It is also appropriate for this introduction to point out that this thesis does not purposefully attempt to represent

a deterministic approach to the Cold War. The information provided is not intended for the purpose of arguing over who was responsible for the Cold War. In this vein, two schools of thought exist. The traditionalists represented by such scholars as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Gaddis Smith, and Herbert Feis, hold the Russians predominately responsible for the Cold War. On the other hand, the revisionists, represented by men like William Appleman Williams, Gabriel Kolko, Gar Alperovitz, and David Horowitz, place the blame on the United States. This paper does not take issue with, or favor, either side. It does not try to attach responsibility. This paper merely deals with a single case study on the results and nuances of a specific American foreign policy action.

Before attempting to answer the question of whether or not the Truman Doctrine saved Greece, it is necessary to outline the circumstances which led to its application in Greece. Consequently, it will be best to start by discussing the historical events in Greece during World War II and prior to March, 1947.

## II. BACKGROUND AND PRELUDE TO AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

The Greeks rival the Jews in being the most politically minded race in the world. No matter how forlorn their circumstances or how grave the peril to their country, they are always divided into many parties, with many leaders who fight among themselves with desperate vigour.<sup>3</sup>

Winston Churchill

Any student of Greece and modern Greek politics would be well advised to start his studies by memorizing the above quotation. It strikes at the very heart of the Greek political psyche and goes a long way in explaining many of the recent problems and catastrophes which have befallen Greece. It is as appropriate today as it was at the beginning of the Second World War.

Greece was hit by the full impact of fascist expansionism, while the country was still under the dictatorial rule of General John Metaxas. The Metaxas regime had been very divisive and harsh for the people of Greece; however, their nightmare was just beginning. On October 28, 1940, Italy attacked Greece. Greek resistance to Mussolini's forces was stiff, and the Greek Army managed to stop the Italians and push them back into Albania. Their victory was nevertheless shortlived. On April 6, 1941, the Germans came to the aid of their fascist allies and took up the battle for Greece. By April 23, 1941, the Germans had won the battle for Greece and an armistice was signed.

The Greek government and the King fled initially to

Crete -- along with 48,000 of the 60,000 British soldiers who had been sent to help the Greeks.<sup>4</sup> By May 31, 1941, the government was forced to evacuate Crete and establish itself at Cairo and then London.

The flight of the government caused the collapse of the political structure of the country. The only thing that remained of the army was a few battalions that were regrouped in the Middle East. Greek sailors were left without ships, and those who escaped later fought on vessels provided by the British. The remaining airmen also fought later in British-provided aircraft.<sup>5</sup> Initially, all armed resistance to the invaders ceased as the country began over three years of a triple occupation by Germans, Italians and Bulgarians. (The Germans occupied the urban centers of Athens-Piraeus and Thessaloniki, plus the Aegean Islands and Crete. The Bulgarians annexed portions of Macedonia and Thrace. The Italians controlled the remaining area.)<sup>6</sup>

As time passed the Greeks began to organize against the occupiers. A number of resistance organizations sprang up, and these forces managed to tie down ten to eleven German divisions.<sup>7</sup> The largest and most effective of the resistance groups was the communist-led National Liberation Front (Ethnikon Apeleftherotikon Metopon -EAM) and its military arm the National People's Liberation Army (Ethnikos Laikos Apeleftherotikos Stratos -ELAS). This group, although controlled by communists, was made up of people from the entire political spectrum who had banded together to fight a common enemy. In addition, as noted by Daniel Yergin in his ex-

cellent book Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State, EAM-ELAS "won the support of large segments of the working class and peasantry, portions of the population that had traditionally been deprived of political influence."<sup>8</sup> EAM-ELAS forces operated throughout the entire country.

The other important resistance group was the National Democratic Greek Union (Ethnikos Dimokratikos Ellenikos Stratos -EDES). This organization was led by a nationalist, General Napoleon Zervas, and operated mostly in the Epirus area in northwestern Greece just below the Albanian border.

In the beginning Britain's concern for tying down Axis forces led it to supply both ELAS and EDES -- with a preference for ELAS. This support from London allowed ELAS to build up a formidable military force which eventually grew to number about 50,000 men.<sup>9</sup>

The Greek resistance groups at first concentrated on harassing the Germans and Italians by sabotaging communications and transportation lines and other critical installations. They focused their efforts on assisting the Allied effort and their operations not only tied down critically needed German troops but also disrupted supply shipments to German forces in North Africa. By 1943, however, the focus of ELAS operations began to change.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who was closely monitoring events in Greece, recalled that: "The Italian surrender in September, 1943, affected the whole balance of forces in Greece. E.L.A.S. was able to acquire most of the

Italian equipment, including the weapons of an entire division,<sup>10</sup> and thus gain military supremacy." EAM-ELAS believed that the Italian surrender would mean that the German forces would be withdrawn soon.<sup>11</sup> This estimate led them to conclude that the time had come to gain overall supremacy and, thus, establish themselves as the next government of Greece. ELAS forces began to attack the other non-communist guerrilla groups, including EDES. But the Germans did not withdraw. The British reacted by suspending arms deliveries to ELAS and increasing their deliveries to EDES. This fight between the guerrilla groups marked the "first round" of the civil war and ended after a truce had been arranged by the British in February 1944.<sup>12</sup>

In September 1944, the German Army finally began to withdraw from Greece.\* The time had arrived for the British, the exiled government, and the King to return. However, ELAS was in control of the countryside and all of the major cities except Athens. EAM-ELAS was in a position to finally take control. But they were stopped by orders from the Kremlin. According to the authors of the Area Handbook for Greece, the Greek Communist Party (Kommunistikon Komma Hellados -KKE) was "ordered" by Moscow, through their military mission in Greece, "to 'avoid opposition' and participate in the Papandreou government."<sup>13</sup> (George Papandreou had been selected as the new Greek Prime Minister just prior to the return

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\*The Germans did not leave Athens until October 12, 1944, and it was not until late October that they had evacuated the entire country.

of the exiled government.) This must have been a bitter pill for the KKE leadership to swallow, but swallow it they did. They acceded to Moscow's orders but demanded a share of the political power, based on their "popular" support -- estimated initially at 700,000<sup>14</sup> -- and military strength.

In late September 1944, EDES, ELAS and Greek Prime Minister Papandreou met under the auspices and direction of the British at Caserta, Italy.<sup>15</sup> On September 26, 1944, an agreement was signed which assured the return of the exiled government. The guerrilla representatives pledged to place themselves under the control of the Greek Government, and Papandreou then put them all under the control of British General Scobie. Scobie was charged with leading the Allies back to Greece.

The Allies returned to a devastated and prostrated Greece on October 15, 1944 -- almost four years after the first Italian attack. The price that the Greeks had paid for their resistance was almost unbelievable. Some of the official loss figures included

. . . war losses, 30,000 killed; dead through famine 360,000; executed by Germans and Italians, 43,000; executed by Bulgarians, 25,000; hostages, 45,000; homeless, 1,200,000; towns, villages ruined, 3,700. By the end of the war the Greek population was reduced by 7 percent (estimated population of 7.5 million). . .

On the economic side, inflation scientifically planned by the Germans ruined the monetary system. . . . The damage to the industrial plant is estimated at \$40,000,000. The Greek merchant marine, which ranked ninth in the world with a total of 1,697,986 tons was the main source of the nations foreign exchange, was almost completely wiped out; over a million tons were sent to the bottom. Rolling stock, too, was about totally destroyed; about 60 percent of the railroad tracks, 60

percent of the telephones, 75 percent of the telegraph wires and installations were wrecked. All big bridges and tunnels, which can be replaced only at tremendous cost, were utterly demolished, and 60 percent of the roads were rendered impassable by demolition. Harbor installations were destroyed in toto.<sup>16</sup>

Between the Axis Powers, the Allies and the Greek guerrillas, the country had been almost totally destroyed.

Beyond the casualties and damaged listed above, a severe blow had been given to the national psyche of the country. The political and governmental organs were in shambles. There was no political consensus, and the country was more politically divided than it had ever been before. Even with this adversity the Greeks could not get together to agree on the type of government and leadership they wanted. Communist, republican, nationalist and monarchist forces were all vying for power. Too much had happened for things to return to "the way they were" overnight. There was no army and no established law enforcement agencies left to insure public order.

The worst problem facing Greece, however, was the distrust, hatred and animosities that had been built up by the Greeks against themselves. Family began to be pitted against family. Brothers became hostile to one another. Charges of traitor, murderer and collaborator became common as the Greeks began to vent their frustrations and pent-up hostilities on each other. The worst of the Greek character surfaced. Suspiciousness and opportunism came to the fore. The Greeks temporarily could unite to meet an external threat, but now they were incapable of unifying themselves without that

external threat. The stage was set for the "second round" of the civil war.

As mentioned above, the Caserta Agreement of September 1944 established a coalition government which included six communist (EAM) ministers out of a total of eighteen. By the time this government returned to Athens, however, the polarization of forces had already begun to have an adverse effect on Greece's political life. The main issues which were beginning to cause trouble were the formation of a national army and the disarming of the guerrilla bands. These two bones of contention were complicated by strong disagreements over the timing of national elections and the return of the king.

The issue over the disarmament of guerrilla groups and the formation of the army came to a head on December 2, 1944, when the six communist ministers in the government resigned. EAM now lost all desire to work in, or cooperate with, the British-backed government. The Greek communist leadership probably also gave up hope of taking over the reins of government by peaceful means. EAM-ELAS forces were still effectively in control of all of Greece except for the capital. They must have estimated that time would work against them and that their powerful position would only decline. It was also obvious to them that, if they turned in their weapons and allowed an army to be organized, they might not be in a position to take control in the future.

The walkout of the ministers on December 2 appears to have been a pretext to precipitate a government crisis.

There is evidence that as early as November 28, 1944, the communist leadership had already decided to use their military force to seize Athens and thus gain control of all of Greece. <sup>17</sup>

The match was set to the fuse by EAM when it called for a demonstration in Constitution Square, the central park in Athens, for December 3, and a general strike for the capital for December 4. These moves were planned to demonstrate the communist's strength and possible to dissuade the British from <sup>18</sup> intervening in what was considered a Greek internal issue. The truncated Greek Government tried to stop the planned demonstration by cordoning off the streets leading to Constitution Square. The police cordon did not hold. When the crowd managed to break through, shots were fired by the police at the advancing mob and the "second round" of the Greek civil war had started.

The fight for Athens was bloody and brutal. The communists moved forcefully to liquidate the existing police and military forces. They also began indiscriminately to massacre suspected German "collaborators" and innocent civilians. EAM began almost systematically to kill their opposition. However, they were guerrillas used to employing hit-and-run tactics. They were not accustomed to city fighting, and they had not anticipated that the British would react as they did.

Winston Churchill had clearly decided that he would not allow Greece to fall to the communist-led guerrillas. Consequently, he ordered General Scobie to use all prudent means to put down the insurrection. Churchill's instruc-

tions to Scobie stated in part: "Do not however hesitate to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress. . . We have to hold and dominate Athens. It would be a great thing for you to succeed in this without bloodshed if possible, but also with bloodshed if necessary." <sup>19</sup>

Following Churchill's guidance, the British reacted with force and also ordered military reinforcements sent from the battle front in Italy. The communists' inability to take the city quickly allowed these reinforcements to arrive in time to play a decisive role in saving Athens. The fighting lasted for over a month, but the British troops finally managed to drive the guerrillas from Athens, and a truce was signed on January 11, 1945. Britain had saved Greece from falling under the rule of a communist government.

Prior to the truce, Winston Churchill and his foreign secretary visited Greece to try to cool down the situation. Churchill managed to arrange for the installation of a new government. In addition, he persuaded King George II to delay his return to Greece and to name a regent, Archbishop Damaskinos, who was highly respected by both sides. The installation of the new government, and the decision by the King not to return until a plebiscite was held, helped relieve some of the tensions and assisted greatly in arranging for the truce.

The end of the "second round" was formalized by the signing of the Varkiza Agreement on February 12, 1945. <sup>20</sup> The agreement established the guidelines for the normalization of political processes, including a call for elections and a

plebiscite on the status of the King. It also called for the disarming of all guerrilla bands, the formation of a national army and amnesty for political but not common crimes.

Unfortunately for the Greeks, the Varkiza Agreement did not cauterize the wounds of the Nazi occupation or the "first" and "second rounds" of the civil war. It served to set the course for the "third" and final round of the civil war.

In analyzing the first two rounds of the civil war, it is important to remember that not all of the people who belonged to EAM-ELAS were hard-core communists. Many, if not most, were not communists at all. There is no doubt that the leadership was made up of "card-carrying" party members of the KKE, but the general membership of EAM-ELAS included bandits, those disgruntled with the system, peasants who had been duped into believing they were helping their country, and those who had joined the resistance to fight the Nazis. In addition, EAM-ELAS had camouflaged its communist image during the Second World War. However, by the end of the "second round" there was no doubt that EAM-ELAS was an indigenous communist movement determined to establish a leftist dictatorship in Greece.

During that era, not too many people understood the true nature of this -- and other -- national liberation movements. The Greeks were no exception. The political turmoil and upheaval was not seen as a growing trend of changing political forces and governments. Monarchies were on their way out. Old, traditional forms of government did not meet the challenges of the day. In many areas the old systems were no

longer satisfying the increasing political demands and awakening of the minority and, in some cases majority groups, that were trying to change the systems of government in their countries.

With the signing of the Varkiza Agreement, the guerrilla bands began to disarm. It was not, though, total disarmament. Many citizens, regardless of their political leanings, kept their weapons. ELAS forces turned in many of their guns, but they did not turn them all in. Most of their better weapons were hidden in the countryside. It is not clear if at that time the intent of hiding these weapons was to await "another day" to fight or was intended as insurance for self-protection. Regardless of the motives, ELAS did manage to put away a large number of weapons and ammunition which would be used at a later date.

In moving to a discussion of the next phase of the Greek civil war, it should be noted that the exact roots of the "third round" are hard to divine. There are those who blame the communists for continuing their quest for power. There are those who blame right-wing politicians and their purge and persecution of the left. It is often necessary and important to assign culpability to one side or the other. In certain situations it is important to identify specific individuals as the culprits. However, for the purposes intended here, it is not vital or necessary to attach the total or specific blame to anyone. It is probably more important to understand the underlying causes.

The "third round" of the civil war was the result of the

convoluted nature of the Greek body politic. It had its beginnings in the ongoing Greek search for a satisfactory governmental system of the majority. It was nurtured by the free-spirited and independent nature of the Hellenic citizenry. It was inflamed by political ideologies of the left and right that were alien and, at the same time, natural. It was not conceived in Moscow or London. It was born in the minds of Plato, Marx, et al. Couloumbis, Petropulos and Psomiades -- astute students of this period -- perceptively observe that "Both sides of the Greek fratricidal conflict can be faulted for soliciting or acquiescing to foreign sponsorship and the resultant foreign intervention. The additional fault of the Greek communists may have been that they relied, short-sightedly, on the support of patrons who had quietly bargained them away at the conference table."<sup>21</sup>

The "second round" of the civil war caused the final polarization of political forces and detrimentally submerged the centrists and moderates. An almost natural backlash against the left began to develop, mostly as a result of the communists' ruthless tactics. The government, the nascent army and the disorganized police forces were now increasingly falling into the hands of the right. The rightists moved to purge the government of leftists and those who were believed to be "soft" on the left. The purge soon gained momentum and the semblance of an inquisition. Many "leftists" lost their jobs. Right-wing civilian groups soon took the law into their own hands and began to harass, attack and kill those Greeks that they could get their hands on who had been, were,

could have been, or were related to, a communist, leftist, or communist sympathizer. The police were most often in sympathy with the attackers and more often than not turned their heads the other way, while the right took its turn at vengeance. The rightists now had the upper hand and zealously sought their revenge as they unleashed a "white terror." The time for reconciliation passed quickly and countless communists, criminals and the persecuted took to the mountains to save their lives. The exodus from the towns and cities to the mountains was a time-honored tradition for the Greeks. Historically, the flight to the mountains and the pursuit of banditry had occurred in the past when individuals or groups were persecuted or they found life in the urban areas dangerous. The often indiscriminate actions of the right consequently caused many to follow this almost instinctive course and helped increase the political problems.

The British in the meantime were pushing to normalize political activity and institutions. Parliamentary elections were called for and held on March 31, 1946. Unfortunately the communists, as a sign of protest, decided to abstain from the voting, and this further isolated them from political participation. The election, which was monitored by an allied commission (American, British and French observers), clearly showed a swing to the right as the conservatives gained a majority. In September 1946, a plebiscite was held on the issue of the return of the king. The electorate voted<sup>22</sup> by 68.9 percent in favor of King George II's return.

The political isolation and strategic loss of strength

of the left forced the hand of the communists. Evidence indicates that at least by February 1946, the KKE decided to launch the "third round" of the civil war and make a final <sup>23</sup> Putsch to control Greece. By early 1946 sporadic guerrilla attacks on isolated areas and villages began. The final round of the civil war had started.

A blow-by-blow, detailed description of the guerrilla war which followed is more properly left for another medium. For the purpose intended here, the Greek war between 1946 and 1949 can be succinctly described as a classic guerrilla war. The communists initially employed hit-and-run tactics against small and isolated locations. The only government forces able to meet the threat were the gendarmerie units which were not equipped, organized or trained to fight the guerrillas. The "new" Greek Army still did not exist.

As time went on the communists increased the size and frequency of their activities, steadily increasing the threat to the government in Athens. This activity centered mainly in the Peloponnesus and the Macedonia-Epirus areas.

After the signing of the Varkiza Agreement many of the communists had sought refuge in the bordering communist-ruled states of Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. These newly established communist governments willingly provided sanctuary and encouragement to the Greek guerrillas. As the KKE's activities increased, these countries -- especially Yugoslavia -- became more involved in supplying, feeding, providing training areas, safe havens, and medical facilities to the insurgents.

The KKE could not have picked a better time to launch its "war of national liberation," in view of the situation in Athens. The Greek Government was not prepared to fight a demoralizing and taxing guerrilla war. Despite Allied and United Nations' aid, the country was still economically devastated. The war sapped the available resources for recovery and, as Greeks fled from the "red terror," the financial burden of feeding the increasing numbers of refugees multiplied. The country could not be rebuilt under these circumstances -- the guerrillas were capable of destroying things as fast as the government could build them. By the end of 1946, the guerrillas appeared to be on the road to victory.

At this time also Britain, the Greek protector, began to feel the strains of World War II and the expense of empire. In addition, the British were experiencing a very harsh winter which further damaged their economic situation. With every day that passed, it became more obvious that the British could not support their presence in the Eastern Mediterranean and Greece. It was under these circumstances that the British and the Greeks turned to the United States for salvation. The United States would have to be the deus ex machina. Who else could save Greece and replace the British?

### III. WHY THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE? WHY GREECE?

The Truman Doctrine was generally perceived as the American counterbalance to communism, and more specifically, Soviet efforts to dominate as many countries as possible so that they could achieve global hegemony. However, viewed from another vantage point, the Truman Doctrine can also be seen as the result of an American inertial momentum to protect and support the liberal democratic philosophy that served as the ideological foundation for the United States. It was a program which represented the deeply-rooted American belief in "government by the governed" and opposition to minority rule by the right, center, or left. It was an extension of the Wilsonian tradition of self-determination of nations and their peoples. The decision to aid Greece was an instinctive, natural reflex action supported by the genetic makeup of the American body politic.

The role of American ideology and political philosophy should not be disregarded when trying to understand the Truman Doctrine. Liberal democratic precepts and beliefs did affect the decisions of American policy-makers. There was within the administration an innate sense of what was right and what was wrong. Nevertheless, there has been a tendency to focus on the selfish motives of U.S. decision-makers and view their policies with a cynical eye. The discussion below will center its attention on these selfish motivations (e.g., national security); with a clear under-

standing that liberal democratic philosophies did subtly affect the formulation and implementation of the Truman Doctrine.

The seeds of the Truman Doctrine were planted during the Second World War, and it was in 1945 and 1946 that they began to germinate. As previously noted, by late 1946 the British began to feel the economic strain of their global commitments. It was becoming increasingly apparent that they would not be able to sustain much of their foreign presence, if their economy was not to be destroyed. And yet, the British probably estimated that if they withdrew their forces and economic-military assistance in Greece that a vacuum would be created. Based on their observations of what had happened and was happening in Europe and elsewhere, the British were probably convinced that this void would be filled by the Soviet Union. The British understanding of what was occurring was clearly outlined by Sir Winston Churchill in his famous "Iron Curtain" speech which he delivered in Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, 1946 -- almost exactly one year before the announcement of the Truman Doctrine. In the speech Churchill warned of the spread of communism and the need for the Western nations to deal with the problem from a position of strength. The Greek situation fit nicely within the context of Churchill's comments.<sup>24</sup> An increase in Russian presence and possible resulting dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean would surely mean a major shift in the balance of power. This shift could result in the eventual communist domination of Europe and the Middle East -- to the detriment

of the West.

In late 1946 and early 1947 messages to Washington from the U.S. Embassy in Athens began to paint a very alarming picture of the situation in Greece. U.S. Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh; Paul Porter, the Chief of the American Economic Mission to Greece; and Mark Ethridge, the U.S. representative on the United Nations commission investigating border violations in Greece, began to see that Greece was on the edge of a precipice. By the middle of February 1947, subsequently declassified State Department messages reveal, MacVeagh, Porter and Ethridge were convinced that the country was on the verge of collapse. These men also believed that the Soviet Union was directly involved in fomenting the revolution. By that time, suspected Russian involvement alone would have been enough to send chills up the spines of American decision-makers. But the diplomatic cables emanating from Greece went much farther than that. One of the messages sent by Ethridge from Athens warned: "Soviets feel that Greece is ripe plum to fall into their hands in a few weeks."<sup>25</sup>

The reports from Greece worried the U.S. Department of State. These reports, coupled with American knowledge that the British might have to cut back on their support to Greece, caused deep concern. Policy-makers had already started thinking that they might have to do something in the immediate future. The Export-Import Bank had provided limited credits<sup>26</sup> to help support Greece. U.S. Ambassador MacVeagh and Paul Porter of the American Economic Mission had already<sup>27</sup> recommended U.S. financial assistance for Greece. As far

back as the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 the United States<sup>28</sup> had begun considering the provision of aid to Greece. Daniel Yergin, the noted author of Shattered Peace, also mentions that Greece was on the top of the list of potential economic crises which had been prepared by the Department of State<sup>29</sup> early in February 1947. Consequently, the bad news that was coming did not catch the Americans totally off balance.

In February 1947, the British Government finally decided that it had to pull out of Greece. Its growing economic problems had been exacerbated by a particularly harsh winter and, although the British did not want to leave Greece, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Hugh Dalton, finally convinced the government that it had no choice. Along with this decision to withdraw, Dalton reportedly convinced His Majesty's Government "to present the matter in Washington in such a manner as to incite the Americans to assume that<sup>30</sup> [Greek] responsibility."

There was no need to "incite" the United States. The U.S. bureaucracy was already primed to take action. Nevertheless, it was not prepared for the short notice that it received, which turned a serious problem into an immediate crisis. The United States was officially notified on February 21, 1947, of the British decision to terminate support<sup>31</sup> for Greece on March 31, 1947.

The American reaction to this notification must be viewed in the overall context of U.S. foreign policy perspectives and the international developments subsequent to the end of the Second World War. It cannot be overemphasized that there

was a very clear belief in Washington that the spread of communism and Soviet political and military moves threatened U.S. national security. As has been previously mentioned, different methods had been tried to stop the Russians, but nothing had apparently worked. Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe and perceived communist initiatives had put enough pressure on the leaders in the American capital to push them toward the belief that something definitely had to be done. No more ground could be given up. No more countries could be allowed to fall under the communist yoke. Reitzel, Kaplan, and Coblenz, writing about U.S. foreign policy between 1945 and 1955, capture American perceptions at this time:

In brief, the Soviet Union was by its actions presenting itself as an expansionist state, unremitting in its efforts to seize every opportunity that opened to create fresh advantage for itself. It appeared unreliable in its interpretation of its international pledges, and to be fostering disintegration in the international system while advocating the need for great power unity. Above all, it appeared to be renewing the thesis of world revolution that its wartime allies hoped had been abandoned. 32

Since 1945 Albania, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia had fallen prey to communism. Hungary and Czechoslovakia were on the brink. Communists were part of the governing coalitions in France and Italy, and there was great concern that these two countries might also fall under Moscow's domination. 33 The Kremlin had been pressuring Turkey for territorial and other concessions since 1945. 34 It was not known if Turkey could resist the Soviet overtures without help, especially after the reduction of British forces from the Eastern Mediterranean. The Russians had

maintained troops in Iran, in violation of previous agreements,  
until March 24, 1946.<sup>35</sup> The situation in China was also tense.  
The spread of communism and apparent Russian ambitions seemed  
to have gone beyond the point of merely challenging the vital  
interests of the United States and its allies. The planned  
British withdrawal from Greece, under the circumstances, was  
seen as opening the way for an even greater, unchecked ex-  
pansion of Soviet influence and power, for communist govern-  
ment and Soviet domination were seen as identical.

General Walter Bedell Smith, the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow  
at the time, had informed Washington that "only the presence  
of British troops had so far saved Greece from being swallow-  
ed in the Soviet orbit."<sup>36</sup> There seemed to be no choice.  
America had to take immediate action to save Greece and  
Turkey from Stalin.

In moving to bolster the Greek regime, the Truman Admin-  
istration was confronted with several major obstacles which  
had to be overcome. The government was primarily faced with  
convincing the Congress that Greece was on the verge of  
falling into communist hands. This would not be easy, in  
light of the fact that the legislative branch was dominated  
by opposition-party Republicans. And, since the Wilson era,  
the Republicans had been consistently more isolationist than  
the Democrats. During the 1946 elections the Republicans had  
won in the Senate by a margin of fifty-one to forty-five and  
in the House by 245 to 118.<sup>37</sup> In addition, there was a  
pervasive sentiment in the Congress to reduce defense and  
government spending, and a six billion dollar cut from the

proposed budget was being threatened. There were also still some powerful congressmen who harbored isolationist tendencies. These congressmen did not want to get involved in any foreign ventures.

Another major problem facing the Truman Administration was the American public. In February 1946, sixty-three percent of those polled by George Gallup approved of the job that President Truman was doing, while twenty-two percent disapproved and fifteen percent had no opinion. By January 1947, a similar Gallup poll revealed that only thirty-five percent of those questioned approved of the President's performance, while forty-seven percent disapproved and eighteen percent had no opinion.

39

Domestic issues more than foreign had eroded Truman's popular support; however, this erosion limited the Administration's foreign policy options and its flexibility. The United States had just concluded a major war. There was no popular desire to become enmeshed in another. There was no calling for involvement in foreign ventures which might lead to war.

A third dilemma was that President Truman was quickly losing the military force that would be necessary if a confrontation with the Soviets developed. At the end of the Second World War the American armed forces consisted of 8.3 million men. The immediate desire of those troops, and the American public in general, was to return to normalcy. Black and Helmreich note that ". . . the American government readily acceded to the popular demand for a rapid demobilization of its armed forces, . . ." By 1949 there were only

1.4 million men in uniform.

The administration moved swiftly to overcome the obstacles. It started with Congress. There was unanimity in the bureaucracy over what actions to take. Now the senators and representatives had to be convinced, and in order to persuade them a very grim picture was painted. On February 27, 1947, during a briefing at the White House -- which had been called to inform the Congressional leadership about the Greek crisis -- Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson recalled that he presented the problem to " . . . all the majority and minority potentates except Senator Taft . . . " <sup>41</sup> Acheson told them

In the past eighteen months, . . . , Soviet pressure on the Straits [Dardanelles], on Iran, and on northern Greece had brought the Balkans to the point where a highly possible Soviet breakthrough might open three continents to Soviet penetration. Like apples in a barrel infected by one rotten one, the corruption of Greece would infect Iran and all to the east. It would also carry infection to Africa through Asia Minor and Egypt, and to Europe through Italy and France, already threatened by the strongest domestic Communist parties of Western Europe. The Soviet Union was playing one of the greatest gambles in history at minimal cost . . . We and we alone were in a position to break up the play. These were the stakes that British withdrawal from the eastern Mediterranean offered to an eager and ruthless opponent.<sup>42</sup>

Acheson's briefing set the tone of the administration's argument and worked effectively in convincing many members of the congressional leadership that the United States had to act. In order to gain the support of the American public and the remainder of the Congress, President Truman went before a joint session of that body on March 12, 1947, to ask for economic and military aid for Greece and Turkey. The speech

launched the American "containment" foreign policy.\* As President Truman noted later in his memoirs, "This was America's answer to the surge of expansion of Communist tyranny . . . This was, . . . , the turning point in America's foreign policy, which now declared that wherever aggression, direct or indirect, threatened the peace, the security of the United States was involved."<sup>43</sup>

Truman's address to the Congress was clearly intended to garner support for the proposed action and, to paraphrase a statement reportedly made by Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg<sup>44</sup> concerning the speech, "scared hell out of the country." The congressional address was plainly designed for domestic rather than foreign consumption. John Lewis Gaddis, who has written extensively about this period, says that the " . . . Truman Doctrine constituted a form of shock therapy: it was a last-ditch effort by the Administration to prod Congress and the American people into accepting the responsibilities of the world leadership . . ."<sup>45</sup> The government's approach worked, and on May 22, 1947, President Truman signed Public Law 75, an Act to Provide Assistance to Greece and Turkey. On June 20, 1947, the required agreement was signed with Greece.<sup>46</sup>

In their determination to become involved in Greece and

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\*This policy was authored by George F. Kennan, who was then the Director of the Policy, Planning Staff, at the Department of State. He had written: " . . . it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies."<sup>47</sup>

end American isolationist tendencies, President Truman and his top advisers took a calculated risk. There was no guarantees of success. If the policy and program failed, the administration would have been in grave trouble with the Congress and the public. Nevertheless, Greece provided a fateful and perhaps unique opportunity. Greece, unlike Eastern Europe, was clearly situated within the geographic realm of American strategic interests in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. If Greece fell, Turkey would be caught in a vise and the Soviets would probably gain unlimited access to the Mediterranean and could thus place a wedge between American and Western interests in Europe and the Middle East. The decision to aid Greece was also simplified by the fact that there were no Russian forces in the country and that the country did not share a common border with the Soviet Union. In addition, historically, the Greeks had never posed, nor did they pose, a threat to the Soviet Union. The solution to the problem, as envisioned, also did not involve the deployment of American forces. And the chances for success looked good.

The Soviets had previously appeared impervious to other American actions and policies. Greece provided the United States with the perfect opportunity to try a new approach without the risk of an immediate or direct Soviet-American confrontation, which could result in war. But, was it American aid and the Truman Doctrine that "saved" Greece? Was the Kremlin masterminding the war in Greece? And why did the communists lose?

These three questions serve as a key for analyzing and understanding the Greek civil war. At the same time, the answers to them provide a great deal of insight into the Cold War, Soviet-American relations, and contemporary problems. They may also provide useful lessons for the future. Consequently, the remainder of this study will be devoted to these questions.

#### IV. SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN THE GREEK CIVIL WAR

The formulation and implementation of the Truman Doctrine was predicated on the belief that communism was monolithic. Major policy-makers in Washington and London were convinced that the civil war in Greece was part of a centrally directed communist plot to enslave Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The rebellion in Greece was seen as part of a master plan which had been spawned and was being directed by the Kremlin. Preconceived beliefs did not allow the principal leaders to see the true character of what was happening in Greece. What was actually occurring in Greece was that the country was beleaguered by Greek Marxist socialist insurgents and not a Russian internationalist, Marxist group.

Just prior to the Americans assuming the role of principal protectors of Greece in 1947, U.S. diplomatic messages between Athens and Washington clearly demonstrated the fear that if the communist-led forces took over Greece they would be subservient to Moscow. President Truman, U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, U.S. Ambassador to Greece Lincoln MacVeagh, and others appear to have been convinced that Russia was ultimately responsible for the war. They believed, as President Truman stated himself, that "Under Soviet direction, . . . , Greece's northern neighbors -- Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania -- were conducting a drive to establish a Communist Greece."

Despite these fears and the reports emanating from Greece, there was evidence that the Soviets were not totally subsidizing or even instigating the communists in Greece. Information available today further supports the thesis that the Soviets were keeping their hands off Greece. According to Daniel Yergin, "The Greek crisis was basically a domestic affair of long standing compounded by Balkan tensions and rivalries. The Soviet Union not only did not cause or aggravate the Greek situation but apparently disapproved of the Communist rebellion and instructed the Greek Communist Party to refrain from resorting to violent tactics."<sup>49</sup>

Analysis of Soviet "expansionist" activity just prior to, and after, the Second World War reveals a pattern. The Soviet Union undertook decisive actions in those states that it had considered vital to the defense of Russia, and moved to create a defensive buffer zone in the areas that had historically been hostile or had been used as invasion routes into the Soviet Union. It can be argued that Russian actions were not motivated primarily by a desire to spread communism but by a feeling of insecurity and a desire to protect their country. This overriding consideration for security pushed them to support, sponsor, and install forces and governments in Eastern Europe that would be, at least, friendly toward them. Obviously, communist governments would be more reliable and preferable than western-oriented democracies or dictatorships of the right.

The expansion of Soviet influence and power in to Eastern Europe and the Balkans was not done, however, without concern

for the interests and positions of the United States and Great Britain. In the negotiations and talks conducted by Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt, the concept of spheres of influence emerged as one of the central themes. The restructuring of a balance of power was clearly a goal of the Great Powers. The precise nature of the spheres of influence might not have been agreed upon exactly by the three leaders, but there is little doubt that they were in agreement over the need to "carve up" the world into balanced spheres of power and influence. Barton Bernstein comments that at least in the eyes of the Russians, Franklin Roosevelt acceded "(reluctant-<sup>50</sup>ly) to a division of Europe." Bernstein also observes that the United States sanctioned the armistice agreements with Hungary and Bulgaria "which left effective power with<sup>51</sup> the Soviets."

In establishing spheres of influence, Greece was unmistakably assigned to the British. "With the tacit approval of the United States, Churchill met in Moscow [with Stalin] on October 9, 1944, and informally carved up the Balkan map<sup>52</sup> . . ." This meeting and what transpired during the meeting was described by Churchill, when he wrote

The moment was apt for business, so I said, 'Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Rumania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions, and agents there. Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety per cent predominance in Rumania, for us to have ninety per cent of the say in Greece, and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?' While this was being translated I wrote out on a half-sheet of paper:

Rumania	
Russia	90%
The Others	10%
Greece	
Great Britain	
(in accord with U.S.A.)	90%
Russia	10%
Yugoslavia	50-50%
Hungary	50-50%
Bulgaria	
Russia	75%
The Others	25%

I pushed this across to Stalin, who had heard the translation. There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all settled in no more time than it takes to set down.<sup>53</sup>

The Russian agreement to give the British predominance in Greece was probably more realistic and pragmatic than it was magnanimous. Possibly as early as 1943, the Soviets may have decided to abandon the Greek communists. "In July, 1943, eight Soviet officers arrived at ELAS headquarters to assess the prospects of the guerrillas." The Soviet military mission reported that ELAS was "just a rabble of armed men not worth supporting."<sup>54</sup> For the remainder of the Nazi occupation the Greek communists' request for Soviet aid was ignored.

Beside the Kremlin's lack of interest in their Greek "comrades," Stalin was well aware of the historical ties between Great Britain and Greece. In addition, the British had come to Greece's aid when they were invaded by Axis forces. London had had representatives in Greece advising and fighting with the guerrillas. The British had supplied the partisans during the Axis occupation. The Greek Govern-

ment in exile had been under Great Britain's protection and supervision. During this time the Greek communists had no real or significant contact with Moscow. Stalin probably also appreciated Greece's geographic importance to the British. If England lost Greece, its lines of communication to the Middle East and beyond would be adversely affected, to say the least. Thus, Stalin was probably not concerned about letting the British have Greece and in the process gain some leverage or concessions in other areas which he felt were more important to the Soviet Union. In addition, the Greek communists would not be the first or the last communists to be sacrificed by Stalin. Richard Barnet aptly observes that despite the Marxist-Leninist internationalist rhetoric, " . . . the Soviet attitude toward Greece conformed perfectly to the Stalinist pattern. Since the Greek guerrillas had taken action independent of the Red army and Stalin's direction, the Kremlin viewed them as a nuisance and a possible threat to the diplomatic relations of the Soviet Union."<sup>55</sup>

The aforementioned discussion between Churchill and Stalin is not enough, however, to conclude that the Russians were not interested in placing Greece within the Soviet orbit. Stalin could have changed his mind later, or he could have seen an opportunity developing which he could exploit to his advantage. Nevertheless, available information and Soviet actions indicate that Stalin held to his October 1944 agreement on Greece.

Prior to the "infamous" October meeting in Moscow, the Russians had occupied Bulgaria.<sup>56</sup> Bulgarian forces were

still in Greek Thrace at this time and the Soviets could have taken advantage of this situation to further their territorial hold on at least part of Greece and gain, for Bulgaria, direct access to the Aegean and hence the Mediterranean Sea. The Russians, however, did not take advantage of the situation. In fact, during the Moscow meetings, on October 10, 1944, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Anthony Eden discussed Bulgaria and the fact that Bulgarian forces had placed British officers<sup>57</sup> in Greek Thrace under house arrest. Eden relates that he objected to this development and the next day Molotov told him that the Russians would "summon [the] Bulgars out of Greece . . ."<sup>58</sup> The Soviets followed through with their word<sup>59</sup> and reportedly ordered the Bulgarians to evacuate Greek soil. In addition, the armistice that was signed on October 28, 1944, between the Russians and the Bulgarians "stated that all territories gained by Bulgaria since 1941 would be surrendered."<sup>60</sup>

As previously described, in December 1944, Greek communist-led rebels tried to overthrow the recently established government. The British moved military reinforcements into Greece to put down this "second round" of the civil war. The bloody battle for Athens, and other major cities, resulted in significant damage and casualties to the already prostrate country.

The swiftness and ferocity of the British military reaction to the communist attack against Athens drew considerable criticism in England and America. As Churchill later wrote:

The vast majority of the American press violently condemned our action, which they declared falsified the cause for which they had gone to war . . . Stalin however adhered strictly and faithfully to our agreement of October, and during all the long weeks of fighting the Communists in the streets of Athens not one word of reproach came from Pravda or Isvestia.<sup>61</sup>

Silence in the Soviet press was not the only support the Russians gave to the British suppression of the "second" communist uprising. During at least one truce meeting in Athens in December 1944, between all the Greek and allied parties concerned, the head of the Soviet military mission in Greece, Colonel Popov, sat on the British side of the table. As Anthony Eden later recalled: " . . . Colonel Popov's uniform no doubt had its effect."<sup>62</sup>

Then again, on April 24, 1945, in a message to Churchill discussing the allied problems in Poland, Stalin wrote:

Poland is to the security of the Soviet Union what Belgium and Greece are to the security of Great Britain. . . . I do not know whether a genuinely representative Government has been established in Greece, or whether the Belgian Government is a genuinely democratic one. The Soviet Union was not consulted when those Governments were being formed, nor did it claim the right to interfere in those matters, because it realises how important Belgium and Greece are to the security of Great Britain. I cannot understand why in discussing Poland no attempt is made to consider the interests of the Soviet Union in terms of security as well.<sup>63</sup>

Regardless of what Stalin said, the "third round" of the Greek civil war began in 1946. With this new round came reports of Soviet complicity and renewed suspicions of Soviet involvement. Yet, no firm evidence exists to support the claims that Stalin had gone back on his word. There is information to indicate that he did not.

In February 1948, two high Yugoslav communist officials

-- Edvard Kardelj and Milovan Djilas -- met with Stalin and Bulgarian officials to discuss a Balkan alliance. During this meeting, in Stalin's Kremlin office, Djilas recounts:

Stalin . . . turned to the uprising in Greece: 'The uprising in Greece has to fold up . . . Do you believe,' -- he turned to Kardelj -- 'in the success of the uprising in Greece?'

Kardelj replies, 'If foreign intervention does not grow and if serious political and military errors are not made.'

Stalin went on, without paying attention to Kardelj's opinion: 'If, if! No, they have no prospect of success at all. What do you think that Great Britain and the United States -- the United States, the most powerful state in the world -- will permit you to break their line of communication in the Mediterranean Sea! Nonsense. And we have no navy. The uprising in Greece must be stopped, and as quickly as possible.<sup>64</sup>

The Russian attitude toward Greece was not altruistic. They were realistic in their moves to dominate Eastern Europe and certain Balkan countries. There were specific areas where they had determined they would not compromise -- areas which were likely to be given up by the United States and Great Britain (i.e., Poland and portions of Germany). There were areas that they were willing to give up. Marshal Stalin's feelings toward the Greek civil war may also have been influenced by the "gunboat" diplomacy that was being used by the United States. As he told Djilas " . . . we have no navy." His sensitivity to the lack of a navy was most likely prompted by the fact that he could not counter the American naval presence in the Mediterranean. In February 1946, as a sign of American resolve and support for Turkey, U.S. Secretary of the Navy, James V. Forrestal "arranged to have the body of

the Turkish ambassador, . . . , taken home on the [USS]<sup>65</sup>  
Missouri, the largest battleship of the fleet . . ."

During 1947, the United States sent to the Mediterranean  
"an additional two aircraft carriers, seven cruisers, eight  
destroyers, and four other military vessels."<sup>66</sup> Stalin, no  
doubt, was painfully aware of the American naval activity,  
and he was not in a position to confront or counter it.

Looking back on Soviet actions it becomes clear that,  
generally speaking, they pushed for the advantage in areas  
that they had militarily liberated from the Nazis and where  
they had maintained military forces. However, Stalin prob-  
ably understood that in some areas, such as Iran, he would  
have to withdraw because Russian presence and domination  
would be totally unacceptable to the West. Above all, the  
Soviets tried to avoid a military confrontation with the  
United States. Besides their desire to avoid direct military  
confrontations, they also were not going to attack and use  
military force to enter new areas. According to George  
Kennan: "It was perfectly clear to anyone with even a  
rudimentary knowledge of the Russia of that day [1947] that  
the Soviet leaders had no intention of attempting to advance  
their cause by launching military attacks with their own  
forces across frontiers."<sup>67</sup>

The British military presence in Greece probably did a  
great deal to suppress any desire that the Soviets might have  
had to exploit the situation in Greece. The massive American  
involvement in Greece after 1947 probably reinforced the  
restraint in Moscow.

Another interesting theory as to why the Soviets stayed out of Greece has been put forth by Milovan Djilas. In his book Conversations with Stalin, he writes:

Not even today am I clear on the motives that caused Stalin to be against the uprising in Greece. Perhaps he reasoned that the creation in the Balkans of still another Communist state -- Greece -- in circumstances when not even the others were reliable and subservient, could hardly have been in his interest, not to speak of possible international implications, which were assuming an increasingly threatening shape and could, if not drag him into war, then endanger his already-won positions.<sup>68</sup>

Stalin's desire to see an end to the Greek insurgency can also be viewed from another perspective. The reduction of the American presence and influence in Europe and the Balkans would have been in the Kremlin's best interests. Once the Americans had drawn back to their continental "redoubt," previous experience would have led to the belief that it would take a major crisis to draw them back out. The substantial withdrawal of American forces from the European continent would make it more difficult for the United States to reassert itself at a later date. The United States' monopoly on nuclear weapons could have also led to a false sense of security. Possession of the atomic bomb, hypothetically, could have led to a reduced reliance on conventional forces and thus negate the need for the stationing of a large conventional force overseas.

If the United States, on its own volition -- or with a little coaxing -- were to withdraw from Europe, there would be no one left to challenge the Soviets. Therefore, it can be argued that it would have behooved the Kremlin to exercise

restraint and take prudent actions which would hasten an American disentanglement in Europe. The rebellion in Greece could only heighten Washington's concern, and at a minimum, increase the time it would take to get the Americans out. More importantly, the Greek war could have resulted in an increased American presence in Europe and the introduction of a sizeable American military force in the Balkans. Any situation which could draw U.S. forces into southeast Europe was definitely not in the interest of the Soviet Union; consequently, a Greek communist rebellion at that time was also not beneficial for Stalin.

We do not have the official Soviet documents or testimony to know exactly what the Russian position was toward Greece. However, a review of a great deal of the literature on the Greek civil war supports the contention that Greece's Balkan neighbors, and not the Soviet Union, supported the communist insurrection. Even the report of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on International Relations notes that, during the congressional hearings on aid to Greece and Turkey and the Truman Doctrine, " . . . at no time were any of the descriptions of Russian behavior or motivation subjected to rigorous questioning . . . In fact, the administration did not provide any evidence of direct Russian aid to the [Greek] rebels. On the contrary, Stalin seemed content to use Greece as a convenient foil to parry Western criticism of Soviet actions in eastern and central Europe."<sup>69</sup>

If the evidence provided above -- that the Soviets were not behind the civil war in Greece -- is accepted, then it

can be concluded that the Truman Doctrine was not necessary. The explicit purpose of the "Doctrine" was to stop the Soviet domination of Greece and the spread of "monolithic," Marxist-Leninist international communism. But the Kremlin's attempted subjugation of Greece could not be stopped because it did not exist. The United States could not "save" Greece from Soviet communism because the salvation was not necessary. This assessment, however, may be too harsh. The value of the Truman Doctrine may have been in the fact that it provided the aid and assistance which was crucial for the defeat of the Greek communist insurgency. The Truman Doctrine could have saved Greece from falling prey to a "communist" dictatorship. The next chapter will address the effects of the American aid to Greece and look into the reasons why the communists lost.

## V. U.S. ASSISTANCE AND THE DEFEAT OF THE COMMUNISTS

No discourse on the impact of the Truman Doctrine on Greece can be conducted without examining the effects of American military and economic aid on the Greek civil war. It was this aid that is often seen as the decisive factor which determined the outcome of the conflict. The explicit reason given for this American foreign policy was to provide enough military and economic assistance to Greece so that the Greeks could fight and win their own struggle against communism.

The American program to assist the Athens government was to be conducted as a two-pronged offensive: military and economic. The primary effort was on the military front and then on the economic front. Obviously, economic assistance would have to be provided simultaneously with weapons.

The major danger facing the Greek government was economic. The economy was at the very heart of the problem. Economic failure would cause the immediate collapse of the existing government. The communist guerrilla war was directed against the economy. The communist insurgents at that time probably did not hope to win control of Greece by systematically destroying the Greek armed forces; they hoped to win by preventing economic recovery and growth. Their use of guerrilla tactics and attacks on isolated villages, plus their engagement of small garrisons of government forces, clearly demonstrated this approach. After their serious

defeat at the hands of the British, they probably felt that the only road to victory was by preventing reconstruction and causing further economic dislocation and deterioration. Eventually, they could have expected that the whole system would break down under its own weight and they would then step in and pick up the pieces. If things got bad enough, the rebels could have hoped that the people would turn to them for their salvation. After all, was not Marxism-Leninism an economic model?

The guerrilla war, launched in 1946, was effectively preventing recovery and reconstruction. British monetary and military support was the only thing that was apparently preventing a communist victory. David Horowitz points out that "In the first three post-war years the British had poured \$760 million worth of supplies into Greece, . . ."<sup>70</sup> Unfortunately, most of this money was spent on basic subsistence rather than on rebuilding the country. Then the British announced that they could no longer afford to subsidize the Greeks.

Had the British pulled out of Greece as planned, on March 31, 1947, without anyone else replacing them, the chances would have been very good that the communists would have eventually come to power. However, the United States decided to become the new patron of Greece.

Once the Americans became immersed in the Greek problem, it became clear that the military effort would have to take precedence over other assistance. The war would have to be won before the economic aid could be effective. It would

do no good to rebuild bridges, construct highways, and build factories if these could be destroyed easily by the guerrillas. Consequently, the major American concern was the war effort, combined with a measured and careful attempt to ease the economic problems by providing the basic necessities and subsistence for the populace and, at the same time, starting building programs -- such as port reconstruction -- which would help the military effort.

The task that Washington had decided to undertake was much greater than the policy-makers appreciated. Nevertheless, a certain feeling of invincibility still permeated the American attitude. The size of the problem in Greece must have paled in the light of what had just been accomplished during the Second World War. There was a crisis and emergency in Greece. But once the decision was made to intervene, there was no thought of failure. The commitment of the United States and its military and industrial might was the panacea. Or was it? There were problems ahead which had not been considered or analyzed.

The first major problem that confronted the United States was the urgency of the situation. Prior to the arrival of the British withdrawal notice on February 21, 1947, the American government had already given some thought to assisting Greece. Richard Barnet explains that "At the Paris Peace Conference on the Balkans, [U.S. Secretary of State James F.] Byrnes had begun thinking about making a major United States commitment to Greece."<sup>71</sup> Secretary Byrnes' thoughts were passed to the planners at the Department of State and the

Pentagon. In October 1946, the American Ambassador to Greece "showed King George II a letter from the President suggesting that the United States was prepared to grant 'substantial aid and supplies' . . . ,"<sup>72</sup> to Greece. The leaders in the United States had also been watching developments in Greece with great interest and were caught off guard only by the "thirty-day notice" they were given. Nevertheless, the top decision-makers moved quickly. By February 26, 1947, five days after notification was given, the President, Secretary of State Marshall, Secretary of War Patterson, and Navy Secretary Forrestal all agreed that military and economic aid should be<sup>73</sup> given to Greece. They knew that they had to act fast. The prognostication from the State Department was that quick<sup>74</sup> action had to be taken if Greece was to be saved. Washington's concern had been heightened by the reports from Greece. As late as February 20, 1947, Ambassador MacVeagh in Greece, in a telegram to Secretary of State Marshall stated in part: " . . . Impossible to say how soon collapse may be anticipated, but we believe that to regard it as anything but<sup>75</sup> imminent would be highly unsafe." On February 21, 1947, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson sent a memorandum to Secretary Marshall which also painted a grim picture. Acheson commented that, "Reports from . . . Athens are unanimous in their alarm over the probability that Greece will be unable to maintain her independence. Determining factors are the probability of an imminent economic and financial collapse and the fact that Greek communists and the Soviet dominated

governments of Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria are making every effort to prevent any improvement in Greek internal affairs . . . ."

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The top leaders in the United States government were ready to take immediate action. However, the legislative branch was not prepared to act as expeditiously, and bureaucratic inertia, coupled with normal physical constraints and procedures, would reduce the response time. Nineteen days after the United States was handed the Greek problem by the British, President Truman went before Congress to ask for aid. In his congressional address he underscored the need for expeditious action when he said that "We have considered how the United Nations might assist in this crisis. But the situation is an urgent one requiring immediate action, . . . ."

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However, as has been previously stated, it was not until May 22, 1947, that President Truman signed the bill providing the aid. It has also already been observed that it was not until June 20, 1947, that the required agreement was signed with the Greeks. It took over ninety days to complete the legal requirements alone. Next came the problems of delivery.

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Fortunately for the United States and Greece, vast amounts of war surplus materials were available for transfer. If the necessary weapons had not been "on the shelf," by the time that they could have been produced, it would have been too late. If the weapons had been taken away from the American armed forces, the U.S. security posture might have been adversely affected. The quick availability of weapons in the United States, Great Britain and Europe greatly simplified

this problem. But still, arms could not be realistically transferred overnight. It was not until May 20, 1947, that a U.S. Army mission left for Athens to determine Greek military needs.<sup>79</sup> Not until August 14, 1947, did the first shipment of arms for the Greek Army arrive in Greece.<sup>80</sup> It took time for the Americans to finally get directly involved in Greece.

The transition between American and British patronage could also have been very difficult, if not devastating, had it not been for London's decision to stick by the Greeks until the United States could take over. Despite the announced plan to withdraw on March 31, Britain continued to provide limited financial support for Greece. In late March 1947, it was even announced that the British Army and the Royal Air Force had turned over £ 1,500,000 (\$6,045,000 at the 1947 exchange rate) worth of surplus stocks and equipment to Greece.<sup>81</sup> The British also maintained a military mission, a police mission, and combat forces in the country. In addition, they continued to train the Greek armed forces.

After the initial delay in the delivery of weapons to Greece the shipment of arms generally improved, but problems continued. Despite U.S. military expenditures of over \$150 million in the first year of the aid program, not enough military material and economic aid had reached Greece to "solve" the problem. On February 12, 1948, the U.S. National Security Council published a top secret report for the President entitled "The Position of the United States with Respect to Greece." In the estimate it was stated:

It is now apparent that the aid program of the United States which expires June 30, 1948 will not strengthen the Greek Government sufficiently to enable it to withstand communist pressure, unless further aid is forthcoming.<sup>82</sup>

It should be noted that this estimate addresses the total question of aid. And, despite this estimate, in terms of actual weapons and material, the Greek Army had reportedly received sufficient weapons by this time and " . . . was<sup>83</sup> completely equipped by the middle of 1948." Thus it took over one year to get the weapons to Greece.

Besides getting enough "beans and bullets" to the battlefield, there was also the issue of changing and upgrading weapons. The Greek armed forces were almost totally equipped with British weapons. American "Automatic rifles and machine guns reached only two operational (Greek) Divisions by the end of the civil war; rocket-launchers and recoilless rifles<sup>84</sup> were in service only in the closing weeks." The decision to exchange the previously held British rifles and machine guns for American ones was made in February 1948.<sup>85</sup> The last major battles of the war occurred in August 1949. It took a long time to implement the plan for weapons modernization.

Even though it can be stated that the Greek Army "was completely equipped by mid-1948" that does not mean that they had all the types and quantities of equipment that they needed or could have used. No great modernization effort had taken place yet. For example, in early 1948 the Greek Army<sup>86</sup> was given \$25 million worth of ex-German war stocks. In addition, not all of the weapons were provided by the United States. In March 1948, approximately twenty-five thousand

rifles were purchased for the Greek Army by Greek residents  
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of Britain.

The next problem faced by the United States was identification of the needs of the Greek armed forces. It would have been impossible to reequip the entire army, navy, and air force. Thus, critical needs had to be identified. These needs and demands were also constrained and tempered by the fact that not only were the Greek forces equipped with British arms, but they also had been trained by the British. The transition to U.S. equipment would have to come, but it would take time. In the interim British war supplies would have to be used.

Compounding the dilemma of U.S. advice and assistance was the basic problem that the Americans were new to the Greeks and vice versa. It would take time to reach an understanding of the actual situation and to establish rapport. Each side had to work hard to create the necessary symbiotic relationship.

The American perception of the problem in Greece was additionally clouded by a lack of understanding of Greece, its people and the real nature of the conflict. In the area of terrain alone the Americans did not immediately grasp the situation. For example, the U.S. military mission did not see the immediate need for mountain artillery -- a weapon which would have been extremely effective against the guerrillas in the mountains. It was not until mid-1948, after continuous Greek requests, that the U.S. began to send  
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75mm pack howitzers to Greece.

Another example of American misperceptions was the provision of vehicles when mules would have served the purpose better. In discussing Greek Army needs before a congressional committee on March 25, 1947, Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh said:

What they need is a lot of mules and communications apparatus, and that sort of thing, so they can operate in the mountains. Now they roll up in trucks to a point where the bandits blow up a bridge and the entire endeavor is defeated.<sup>89</sup>

Despite the ambassador's advice, the U.S. had shipped 2,800 vehicles to the Greek forces by March 1948.<sup>90</sup> (Had not General Eisenhower said that the jeep was the vehicle that had won the war?) Wheeled vehicles were plagued by mechanical problems because of the poor roads in the country. Vehicular problems also had a bad impact on the logistics situation. In addition, vehicles hindered operations in the mountains and reduced the element of surprise. In order to redress this problem, in June 1949, an order was placed for 4,000 mules. It was not until June 1949 that "all infantry battalions were placed on the mountain unit establishment and all vehicles were withdrawn to the brigade motor transport platoon."<sup>91</sup>

Based on the above example it would not be accurate to conclude that the mule-vehicle trade-off had a good or bad effect on the outcome of the war. It does, however, serve to underscore the types of problems encountered and the time it took to get things done.

The Americans also failed to perceive the importance of the navy and the air force. This might have been because

the rebels did not possess a navy or an air force and consequently the Greek Navy and Air Force was not threatened. Only six U.S. patrol boats were added to the Greek Navy during the civil war.<sup>92</sup> All other naval craft had been provided by the British.

The Greek Air Force also did not receive a large input of American equipment. Greek air assets were modest and should have been upgraded to provide for much better air support for the ground forces. Part of this problem could have been caused by monetary constraints and the relatively long time that it would have taken to train pilots and air crews. The provision of airplanes was probably also affected by the belief that the war would end shortly. To acquire aircraft and train their crews would have taken a long time. In addition, the annual American congressional appropriations cycle did not encourage long-range planning and expenditures or increasingly expensive programs.

Throughout the Greek civil war the aerial assets came predominately from British stocks. The British "Spitfire" was the mainstay of the Royal Hellenic Air Force (RHAF) and it was their most effective air weapon until the closing days of the war. The first American planes were delivered to Greece in February 1948.<sup>93</sup> These aircraft were "trainer-types" that were used mostly for observation and reconnaissance. The major combat aircraft provided by the United States was the Curtiss "Helldiver" bomber. Forty-nine of these bombers were given to the Greeks in August 1949,<sup>94</sup> and they were first used in combat just five days before the

end of the war.

Even though there were problems in the delivery of material and the mix of equipment provided, an evaluation of this aspect of U.S. aid alone would present a false picture. There was much more to the effort than this. And even if the problems in the equipment and other military-related areas had been greater, it is vital to remember that there were more important issues to consider. The political, economic, and psychological impact of the American effort was extremely significant. The fact that the United States was backing the government in Athens and had laid its prestige on the line was not an inconsequential matter. (Unfortunately, how much this contributed to the ultimate victory cannot be judged.)

The Truman Administration's decision to help Greece with military and economic aid involved much more than the mere transfer of weapons, ammunition, and supplies and equipment from one country to another. The United States could not just deliver its aid to the ports of Piraeus and Salonkia and forget it. It had to insure that the material was handled quickly and that it reached its intended recipient. Washington also had to be certain that the American taxpayers' money was being used for the intended purposes. Additionally, some provisions had to be made to train the beneficiaries to operate and employ the equipment that would be provided to them.

President Truman and his advisers knew that there was more involved than simple arms and monetary transfers. Thus,

the President, in his proposed program, stated

In addition to funds, I ask the Congress to authorize the detail of American civilian and military personnel to Greece and Turkey, at the request of those countries, to assist in the tasks of reconstruction, and for the purpose of supervising the use of such financial and material assistance as may be furnished. I recommend that authority also be provided for the instruction and training of selected Greek and Turkish personnel.<sup>95</sup>

The request for personnel assistance was necessary if the program was to be effective. However, the decision to involve American military and civilian personnel had to be tempered by domestic political considerations. Congress was in no mood to entertain even the slightest indication or hint that U.S. forces might be used to fight "someone else's war." They were very leery of the possibilities of getting the country inextricably entangled in a misconceived or misunderstood foreign venture. The American public was likewise not interested in any venture which would require the deployment of forces from the continental United States. The memory of World War II and the sacrifices that had to be made was still too fresh in their minds. Nevertheless, realistically, if the aid package was to be effective it would have to involve the stationing of Americans in Greece.

The Administration had already given some thought to the involvement of combat troops in Greece. It had been decided, however, that this contingency would only be considered under extreme circumstances, which were unlikely in the foreseeable future. There was no immediate intent to send combat troops to Greece. Consequently, the proponents of the aid to Greece policy moved quickly to dispel any possible

rumors or beliefs that support for the program would mean an eventual commitment of a large number of civilians or military forces. On March 24, 1947, Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in testimony before the Committee on Foreign Relations, said that the missions sent to Greece and Turkey would be small. He also added that: "Our missions will consist only of observers and advisers."<sup>96</sup> This latter statement was obviously meant to allay any fears that combat troops would be used.

Congress accepted the Administration's plan and assurances, but it also made sure that there were not many loopholes in the law. In the "Act to Provide Assistance to Greece and Turkey" the number of soldiers, sailors, and airmen that could be used was "limited." The act also provided for instruction and training but stipulated that the American military men could be used "in an advisory capacity only."<sup>97</sup>

The significance of the limitation of the actual involvement of Americans was an important factor which had an impact on the United States' ability to handle equipment once it had arrived in Greece, the number of Greek soldiers and organizations that could be trained, and the number of advisers that could be assigned to combat units.

The original size of the U.S. military advisory mission sent to Greece was small and consisted of only sixty-two officers and men.<sup>98</sup> It became quickly apparent that more men were needed for the job at hand and by November 1947, it was announced that the advisory mission would be increased to ninety officers and eighty men.<sup>99</sup> "By early 1948 over two

hundred and fifty U.S. officers were 'advising' the tactical operations of the Greek Army at the division level . . . ."<sup>100</sup>

Throughout all of this advisory effort there were obstacles along the way. Some of the barriers were small and others were large. For instance, the Greeks originally had been advised by the French and had accepted their staff methods. Then came the British, and the Greeks were imbued with their procedures. With the arrival of the Americans the Greeks would have to adjust to still another system and methodology.

During this entire period, from the beginning of the "second round" in December 1944, until the end of the "third round" in October 1949, the government in Athens -- and later the Americans -- were immeasurably assisted by Great Britain. Even though the British had been forced to reduce their commitment to Greece because of economic considerations they did not abandon their Greek friends. They stayed to help until American assistance arrived. Had they pulled out abruptly, irreparable damage could have been done. The maintenance of their presence made it easier for the United States to take over and reduced the amount of time that it would have taken before the impact of American assistance was felt.

In October 1944, when the British returned to Greece with the newly reconstituted Greek Government, there had been no army to speak of. By the time the American advisers arrived the Greek Army was approximately 100,000-men strong. The

British had also trained the armed forces, civil defense forces, and the police. Even after the U.S. arrival the British maintained their mission in Greece, and they were responsible for most of the in-country training provided to the armed forces. Their police and prisons mission helped train the national defense forces which ultimately became responsible for the protection of the cities and towns. This training, coupled with the expansion of the forces which was made possible by American money, was significant for the war effort. The creation of an efficient police force and gendarmerie freed the army from static defense and let it attend to its principal job of finding and destroying the rebels.

British troops remained in Greece until November 1949.<sup>101</sup> Their presence prevented adventurism by Greece's northern neighbors. Their presence also lent moral support and gave substance to the Greek Government and the Greek armed forces.

The foregoing discussion was not intended to denigrate the American effort nor misrepresent its impact or importance of the assistance provided. The intent has been to add balance and understanding to the situation and the problem. Contrary to general belief, the provision of American equipment does not seem to have been significant or decisive for the outcome of the war. It arrived far too late. American financial support, on the other hand, did allow the Greeks to expand and maintain a larger military force. By the end of the war this force included:

Army	147,000	
Navy	13,500	
Air Force	7,500	
National Defense Corps	50,000	102

America provided not only the arms and ammunition for this force but also their clothes, food, and salaries. However, was this force totally responsible for victory? A thorough examination of the facts would lead to the conclusion that the Greek Government's ability to put down the insurrection and prevent the takeover of the country by a communist minority would have been greatly reduced with the withdrawal of the British and without American assistance. But other factors which have been discussed (i.e., British suppression of the "second round" and the lack of Soviet support for the insurgents) were also very important.

American involvement in Greece between 1947 and 1949 could serve as a model for other similar situations. It clearly demonstrated that it takes time to assist a country with military and economic aid -- even in crisis situations. Assistance cannot be provided within a matter of days or weeks. The Greek case also vividly highlights the importance of American domestic politics and public sentiment and the government's ability to react to a foreign crisis. Furthermore, it demonstrates that there are limitations even after the decision to assist or intervene has been made.

The Greek crisis should, additionally, serve as a paradigm for U.S. military assistance efforts. Clearly there is much more involved in an aid program than the transfer of

weapons from one point to another. There are many things involved such as: training, military missions, advisory teams, etc. The lessons should be obvious.

Two qualified observers of the Greek civil war, in their writings, have probably summed up the impact of the American military aid and mission best. U.S. Marine Corps Colonel James C. Murray, a member of the military mission in Greece in 1949, discussed the provisioning of Greek Army units with American arms in the latter part of the war. He states:

The improvements (in armaments) came gradually, . . . , and did not hit their full stride until after hostilities were over.

. . . . .

In all probability the war would have ended had no changes in armament occurred.<sup>103</sup>

British Colonel C.M. Woodhouse, who served as the commander of the Allied Military Mission in Greece during World War II, noted that, "A post-war analysis concluded that AMAG [American Mission for Aid to Greece] did not achieve its full results until after hostilities were over."<sup>104</sup>

But, the impact of American aid cannot be dismissed in such a cavalier fashion without delving further into the causes which led to the communist's defeat.

The lack of Soviet aid and support for the guerrillas has already been discussed. The impact of American aid and involvement has likewise been chronicled. We must now turn to other matters which were responsible for or contributed to the final outcome.

Initially, it should be observed that no one event or

action can be singled out, realistically, as being predominantly or exclusively responsible for termination of the Greek civil war. More appropriately, it must be recognized that the end result was the cumulative product of the interactions of specific forces, within a given environment, and during a particular period of time. Given other circumstances in the same place and during a different time, the consequences would have indeed been different. The situation in Greece at the end of 1949 is analogous to a chemical experiment. Specific ingredients, in measured quantities, were blended together under unique conditions of temperature and pressure to produce a desired substance. Given a different set of chemicals, and a variant environment, a different substance would have been produced.

There can be no doubt that the massive aid and assistance provided by the United States was a key ingredient in affecting the outcome of the Greek civil war. Without a doubt, psychologically and economically, the Truman Doctrine had a far-reaching and positive impact on the pro-Western Greek faction. Yet, American policies and assistance did not win the civil war.

Beyond the consideration of the American factor within the Greek equation, the actions of the Soviet Union also played a dramatic and incontrovertible role in the Greek tragedy. Nevertheless, the lack of Russian complicity and their desire to end the crisis does not represent the decisive factor of the war.

It can be unequivocally stated that the American-backed forces won the war. However, when the question is asked: Why did they win? it is probably accurate to say that they won themselves with outside assistance. In addition, it should be noted that the Greek communists contributed significantly to their own defeat.

It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to rank by order of importance the exact impact of American aid and Soviet involvement (or non-involvement) with respect to the outcome of the Greek civil war. It would probably be even more difficult to operationalize and rank all the variables that contributed to the communist defeat. It is not all that important to determine what factors more than others affected the outcome of the war. What is important to understand is that many events and many factors cumulatively interacted to influence the outcome.

It can be effectively argued that without American economic aid and military assistance, after the British withdrawal, the Greek Government probably would have collapsed, leaving the guerrillas in an excellent position to take over the reins of government within a short period of time. On the other hand, recent American experiences would indicate that in order to decisively defeat communist insurgents, other events must occur and certain conditions must be met. Recent history has clearly demonstrated that American economic assistance and military aid -- even military force alone -- cannot automatically lead to the defeat of people waging "wars of national liberation."

The defeat of the communist insurgent forces in Greece began with the "second round" of the civil war in December 1944. EAM-ELAS was at the apex of its power just prior to the return of the government-in-exile and the British in October 1944. As previously discussed, EAM-ELAS was in almost total control of the country at that time. There was no Greek force capable of opposing them. In addition, the returning government was too weak and disorganized to mount an effective campaign against them. However, EAM-ELAS was also somewhat disorganized and apparently did not have a good plan at hand to take over. It lost precious time before it initiated its operations to seize power. Moreover, it did not have the same type of assistance and support which the Soviets provided to other countries which they had occupied in ruthlessly removing its opposition. The Greek communists also failed to get their members named to key ministries in the new government such as the ministry of interior. In essence, they did not --and possibly could not -- exploit their advantages and seize the proper moment to act.

Beyond the EAM-ELAS weaknesses noted above, its major mistake at this time was that it misjudged the intentions and resolve of the British. Had the communists suspected what the British would do, they could have timed their actions better and taken steps to neutralize or reduce the impact of British actions (i.e., propaganda campaigns against British "imperialism" and disruption of London's efforts to reinforce and resupply its forces in Greece). The setback handed to

them by the British also removed some of the sheen of political legitimacy and forced them to resume "bandit" operations and the concomitant "bandit" image.

As a result of the "second round," EAM-ELAS moved from a decidedly superior to a generally inferior position. It had reached the pinnacle of its power and henceforth it declined steadily.

The suppression of the "second round" insurrection in December 1944-January 1945 was not the only significant British action that contributed to the communist's ultimate loss. It should be recalled that it was Winston Churchill who had arranged with Joseph Stalin for Greece to remain within the "Western sphere." British economic support after the Second World War had also been a critical factor. They had played a key role in the return of the exiled government to Greece, and within their capabilities had begun the reconstruction of the government and the armed forces. Their presence probably prevented Soviet adventurism. When they were forced to reduce their commitment they assisted in the transition to American patronage. They played an important part in the training of police and self-defense forces. The British also maintained a military force in Greece until the end of the "third round." Tautologically, the British contributed significantly to the communist loss.

The machinations of the British, Russians and Americans did not stop the Greek communists from waging a guerrilla war. Foreign intervention and assistance did not serve as the coup de grâce. The decisive blows which ended the civil

war were meted out by the national Greek government and by the communists themselves.

The Greek communists contributed significantly to their own downfall by alienating the populace and many of their own followers. The KKE leadership also irreparably damaged its cause by making some very ill-advised and untimely decisions. For example, early in the war the guerrillas decided that only Greeks would be used in the fight to unseat the government in Athens.<sup>105</sup> This decision, standing by itself, would not appear to have been a bad one. However, when combined with other developments, it limited its ability to recruit and field the requisite fighting force.

The guerrillas also made a grave mistake when they resorted to terrorism and brutality against their fellow countrymen. Granted that their harsh tactics produced an almost insurmountable problem for the Greek Government by creating a very large refugee problem. By early 1949, there were over 700,000 refugees from the war (approximately one-tenth of the population) that depended on the government for subsistence.<sup>106</sup> These refugees placed a great economic burden on the country. But, beyond this burden, the massive numbers of refugees also reflected a lack of support and sympathy for the communists. Left-wing terrorism and the forced recruitment of fighting men and women exponentially increased the human misery and suffering, which in turn, reduced the popular support that the guerrillas would need during the latter stages of the war. The KKE's tactics drove many peasants from their rural towns and villages into larger

populated, government-controlled areas. Consequently, many of those who could have helped the communists were lost; many more, who were neutral, became opponents; and the manpower pool in the countryside began to evaporate. By early- and mid-1949, as the Greek National Army's capabilities, efficiency, and offensive operations increased, rebel casualties mounted. In order to replace their losses, the guerrillas had to rely more and more on poorly-trained soldiers and forced recruits. They had to depend on many who did not want to fight and did not believe in "the cause." Additionally, the proportion of Slavo-Macedonians, rather than ethnic Greeks, that constituted the communist fighting forces grew sharply. C.M. Woodhouse noted that by mid-1949 "14,000 out of less than 20,000 guerrilla fighters were Slavo-Macedonians."<sup>107</sup> The movement began to lose its indigenous facade.

The Greek government used the harsh guerrilla tactics to its advantage as it propagandized and proselytized the citizenry. The best example of this was the well publicized guerrilla abduction of between 25,000 and 30,000 children.<sup>108</sup> These children were all taken behind the "Iron Curtain." Kidnapping children does not win friends or converts; it does adversely influence the people.

The most severe blow to the insurgents was dealt to them by their communist brethren. After the "second round" the KKE disbanded ELAS and formed the "Democratic Army" (DSE). The KKE and DSE were able to prosecute the war because of support and sanctuaries being provided by their communist Balkan neighbors: Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The

Yugoslav support was especially critical for the success and longevity of the guerrilla operations. However, this assistance was not totally altruistic.

The Greek communists could not have sustained a war against the established government without outside assistance. The leadership of the KKE was well aware of this. Therefore, it turned to the closest and most logical sources for support -- other Balkan communists. Greece's communist neighbors were very willing to aid the KKE, but for a price. Despite the internationalist appearance and rhetoric of Marxism-Leninism, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria hoped to get something in return for their assistance. Their expected gains were primarily driven by nationalistic interests rather than a burning desire to participate in the establishment of another communist country. Out of ignorance, necessity, or ideology, plus probably a degree of desperation, the KKE willingly acceded to Yugoslav and Bulgarian demands. These demands damaged the KKE's image and caused internal dissension. The KKE also failed to accurately assess and analyze these demands. Had it done so, it would have seen that its relationship with Yugoslavia and Bulgaria was based on convenience and that when the circumstances were no longer convenient, or conflicted with other interests, it would be abandoned by its patrons. The crux of the dilemma was based on Bulgaria's desire to annex Thrace and Yugoslavia's efforts to unify all of Macedonia under Belgrade's control. Richard Barnett indicates that by late-1946 General Markos, the head of the "Democratic Army," agreed to cede Greece's Slavic areas to

Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Barnet also reveals that "Tito agreed to give more weapons and supplies [to the Greek rebels] in return for the right to veto any changes<sup>110</sup> in the high command of the Greek Democratic Army." Thus, the Greek communists placed themselves at the mercy of unreliable, capricious and opportunistic patrons.

In 1948, an open rift developed between the Yugoslav communist leader, Josip Broz Tito, and Russian leader Joseph Stalin. This rift led to the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform on June 28, 1948. The break in the communist ranks also caused a split within the KKE. There were those who sided with Stalin and those who were sympathetic to Tito. The pro-Stalin faction gained the upper hand and purged the pro-Tito element. The pro-Tito element included some of the more capable guerrilla fighters including the military leader General Markos.

By January 1949, Colonel Murray notes that supplies for the guerrillas from Yugoslavia had "fallen off to a mere trickle."<sup>111</sup> In addition, because of the Tito-Stalin dispute, Yugoslavia closed the border to the Greek guerrillas on July 10, 1949.<sup>112</sup> In discussing the effects of this Yugoslav action, Theodore Coulombis relates that it " . . . enabled the Greek forces to concentrate on insulating the Greek-Albanian frontier, and left open on the Greek-Bulgarian frontier which was too distant from the Communist base of operations . . . to be of any military significance. Thus communist guerrilla supply lines were cut, with commensurate loss in their tactical effectiveness."<sup>113</sup> According to Murray, the

Yugoslav border closing also meant that 30 to 35 percent of the guerrilla fighters were lost to, or isolated from, the main effort.<sup>114</sup>

The KKE compounded the border closing problem by deciding to use conventional tactics to meet the reconstituted, re-organized and attacking Greek Army. The rebel leader Nikos Zakhariadis decided to give up guerrilla tactics and defend the communist base areas within Greece.<sup>115</sup> One of the major precepts of guerrilla warfare is not to hold ground for any length of time during the unconventional warfare phase of operations. Guerrillas that decide to hold ground against a relatively modern conventional force are condemned to failure.

The "Democratic Army's" decision to "fight fire with fire" came at a bad time. The politicians in Athens had finally understood many of the shortcomings of the military structure and they agreed to reorganize and place the Army under a unified command -- thus eradicating much of the petty bickering and political influence that had plagued the Army's efficiency. Up until this time the politicians' control had been so great that U.S. News and World Report pointed out in an article in March 1948, that:

Political control of the 132,000-man [Greek] Army has been so great that members of Parliament often vetoed military orders, [and] had Army units stationed in their own areas regardless of military needs elsewhere.<sup>116</sup>

The most important development of the reorganization was the appointment of the very capable Field Marshal Alexander Papagos as the new commander-in-chief on January 19, 1949.<sup>117</sup> Marshal Papagos had been the commander of the forces that had

defeated the Italians in 1940-1941. As reported in The Times of London, he had a "well-known flair for choosing the best subordinates."<sup>118</sup> Prior to accepting the appointment,

Papagos had laid down certain demands and conditions which the government accepted. These demands included: complete control of planning, order of battle, appointments and operations; no interference by the allied missions; and martial law throughout the country, with strict censorship.<sup>119</sup>

Papagos' leadership and abilities regenerated the military. His impact was described best by Murray when he wrote: "Under Papagos the Army was galvanized into action. Its manpower was not increased, its training was not greatly improved and there was no significant increase in its equipment. The Army was simply made to do what it was capable of doing, and no more than this was then needed to gain victory."<sup>120</sup> Thus the Greek communists, who had decided to use conventional tactics, met a much larger, better equipped and markedly more efficient force on the battlefield. The outcome of the civil war was now assured.

But what of those diehards and doubters? The communists added to their growing problems and increased the disaffection for their cause when on March 1, 1948, their station, "Free Greece Radio," announced that the KKE was supporting the Macedonian National Liberation Front and the creation of an independent and autonomous Macedonian state.<sup>121</sup> This overt act publicly abdicated Greek rights to a portion of their country. To the average Greek, who was (and is) very nationalistic, this was an act of treason. It was one thing

for Greek to fight Greek. It was quite something else to advocate giving up the land that your ancestors had fought for to someone else. This radio announcement not only helped the cause of the government in Athens, but it also caused more rifts within the KKE itself. Many communists were nationalists and were not fighting to give away part of their homeland.

The determined Greek communist attempt to gain control of Greece finally ended on October 16, 1949, when the communist radio announced that the "Greek Democratic Army" had<sup>122</sup> decided to "cease-fire." The insurrection had collapsed under the weight of all those events and actions which have been previously detailed. Many actors deserve credit for the results. However, the ultimate credit goes to the Greek people themselves. Their stamina, determination and perseverance provided the leaven for victory. The Greek people are the ones who suffered the most and sustained themselves long enough to savor the fruits of their labor -- victory. They deserve the praise for the results.

## VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In attempting to analyze and understand the Greek civil war and the Truman Doctrine, a great deal of caution must be exercised in order to avoid subjective, emotionally charged or erroneous conclusions. This must be so because only half of the story is known. There is no shortage of books, biographies, memoirs, articles, official documents, etc., on the subject in the West; however, there is a paucity of source material from the East. Unfortunately many of those on "the other side" have either not told their story or for their own reasons have not told the full story. Official Soviet, Yugoslav, Albanian, Bulgarian, and other records are not available for study and scrutiny. One cannot assiduously review the events in Moscow during this critical period as one can those in Washington, London, and Athens. As long as this situation prevails, there will be doubt and disagreement. There can be no final judgment until the records of the KKE are perused. Nevertheless, certain observations can be made.

There is no doubt that this period in history represented one of those times of transition. It was a time of great upheaval, when "old truths" were no longer true and the "new truths" were not understood. It was a time of drastic change and turmoil in the international political order. It was a time of great opportunity, anxiety and fear. There was a great deal of room for misunderstandings and mistakes. It was a time when errors in judgment and miscalculations could

be made easily. The Greek civil war was one of those events that was not understood and, paradoxically, misunderstood at the same time. It was an internal struggle for political power, even though it was viewed as part of an international conspiracy. Communism was not "monolithic." Moscow did not control or support all communist movements. But because the Kremlin was not behind the war in Greece did not make it less insidious and more palatable. "International" Marxist-Leninist ideology was behind the conflict in Greece. This did not, however, make the implications and the fact of the war less dangerous or important -- especailly for the Greeks. But above all, it must be remembered that the war in Greece was started by Greeks and it had to be the Greeks who ended it.

The American and British reactions to this crisis are understandable but cannot stand without criticism. It is interesting to note that a great deal of what has been written on the subject indicates that American actions were based on American interests. These interests were seen as being directly threatened by Soviet interests, which were not totally known or understood. Somewhere in the transition between war and peace, both sides probably simplified the issues to "good versus evil." The complexion of things became black and white; there was no gray. Greece was gray but could not be seen as such.

The American involvement in Greece was almost totally based on U.S. national security interests. To a lesser degree, the decision to intervene in Greece was driven by the sub-

conscious political ethos of the leadership in America. The actions of the United States were not based on an overwhelming desire to help the Greeks; they were driven by national security interests and a belief in what was right. As Seyom Brown has observed

As sincere as any Administration has been in professing our [U.S.] larger commitment to the well-being and liberties of all peoples, all have tended to decide major foreign policy questions, ultimately, in terms of the irreducible national interest: how will a given action or program affect the power of the United States to secure its way of life for at least its own people? What actions and programs are required in order to keep the power of potential adversaries below a level at which they could force the United States to choose between its survival and its way of life.<sup>123</sup>

The Truman Doctrine, clearly, was promulgated in the name of U.S. national security interests and for the protection of its citizens.

In reviewing the events prior to, during, and after the implementation of the Truman Doctrine several facts stand out. For example: except for consultations with the British, the American decision to aid Greece was almost unilateral. The Greeks were not consulted in a meaningful fashion. The United Nations was bypassed completely. No negotiations were attempted or discussions held with the Soviets, Yugoslavs, Albanians, Bulgarians, et al. There do not appear to have been any discussions of policy alternatives within the highest councils of the American Government.<sup>124</sup> The fear of monolithic communism, the danger of political isolation, the future threat of economic encirclement, and indigenous ideologies and ideals did not let Washington see what was

happening in Greece. Fear did not allow for a measured response to world events.

Much of the fear about "monolithic" communism, Soviet intentions, and the exact nature of the problem in Greece could have been eliminated by an efficient national intelligence organization. Unfortunately one did not exist. Along with the general demobilization after the Second World War came the reduction of American intelligence capabilities. It was not until the passage of the National Security Act of 125 1947, in July of that year, that the United States began to organize and build an intelligence structure capable of meeting the increasing needs for accurate information. Good intelligence information, operations, and analysis was absolutely imperative for the formulation of sound decisions and policies. The Truman Administration initially did not have the intelligence to support its needs; consequently, it had to rely on its own perceptions and instinctive judgments. The administration had no other choice.

In spite of the fact that there was no good intelligence information available, there were alternatives available. One possible alternative was the United Nations; however, the United States had lost faith in that organization's ability to solve crises and global political problems. The United Nations was also circumvented because of the anticipated Soviet veto in the Security Council. Nevertheless, the Russians could have been consulted. They were not consulted.

The success of the Greeks in defeating the communists led to a false sense of accomplishment. It led American

decision-makers to believe that the policy was sound and had succeeded in stopping the spread of communism. These beliefs were the forebears of more difficult problems. These beliefs and the Truman Doctrine ultimately led to American involvement in Korea and Vietnam.

It should be clear to the reader by now that the Truman Doctrine and American assistance alone did not save Greece from communism. The research conducted for this thesis also clearly draws one to the conclusion that the American decision to become involved in Greece was based on the false assumption that the Soviet Union had instigated, was supporting, and was directing the Greek insurgents. Succinctly stated, it would appear that the Truman Doctrine did not achieve its purpose. But did this policy fail altogether? What was the value and meaning, if any, of this program? Was it wrong? Was it useless?

In order to place the Truman Doctrine in its proper perspective again, it may be valuable to reiterate those factors which contributed to the collapse of the communist insurgency in Greece. The following developments and actions were obviously significant (not listed in order of importance):

- The British support and assistance from 1944 through 1949.
- Lack of Soviet interest and involvement in the rebellion.
- American aid and assistance.
- The perseverance, sacrifices and labors of the Greek democratic forces.

-- The internal split within the KKE and its decision to use conventional tactics just prior to the end of hostilities.

-- The KKE's terrorist tactics and its recruitment policies, which alienated the populace.

-- The anti-communist nature of the Greeks in general.

-- The Tito-Cominform rift and the eventual closing of the Yugoslav border to the Greek communist insurgents.

-- The Greek communists' association with autonomy movements which were inimical to the Greek national character and interests (i.e., support for the Macedonian National Liberation Front).

-- The accession of Field Marshal Papagos as the commander-in-chief.

In reviewing the above list, if we again ask the question: Did the Truman Doctrine save Greece? we must answer that it contributed to victory but probably was not the decisive factor. In fact, if certain other events had not occurred it could be concluded that all of the American aid in the world could not have saved Greece (Vietnam being a good case in point). Nevertheless, the Truman Doctrine cannot be dismissed in such a frivolous manner. Perhaps, the true meaning and value of the Truman Doctrine cannot be ascertained by the question previously asked, but rather by rephrasing the question and asking: What would have happened to Greece without American aid? This latter question is rather contentious because it requires a totally speculative answer. It can, however, be safely noted that without American aid

and assistance, coupled with the British withdrawal, the Greek communists would have had a much greater chance of success. The odds would have been, most certainly, in favor of a communist victory.

The arguments noted may appear to be paradoxical. On the one hand it is stated that the Truman Doctrine did not save Greece and at the same time it is also noted that without it the communists stood an excellent chance of winning. Both statements are basically accurate. However, we can never be totally sure of the outcome without American aid because that did not happen. The course of history might have been changed if events had not occurred as they did; but, "if" is one of those imponderable and intangible words.

In actuality, the meaning of the Truman Doctrine is much more subtle and important. Its value is not tied strictly to Greece, but more importantly, to global politics and international relations. The Truman Doctrine must be seen as the correct general policy for the United States and Europe at that time. It must also be viewed as the right American global foreign policy for several reasons.

Despite the fact that the Soviets were not involved in Greece, if the United States had not acted to support the pro-Western faction in Athens, the Russians might have moved -- at least covertly -- to aid the rebels and they could have eventually added another country to their growing sphere of influence. The establishment of a communist government in Athens, without control by the Kremlin, would have at least favored the Soviet Union. Thus, the United States

might not have saved Greece from the Soviets between 1947 and 1949, but in the long run, American actions probably saved the Greeks from Soviet adventurism and possible future domination by the Kremlin.

The Truman Doctrine also served as a vehicle for ending American isolationism and the reestablishment of a balance of power in Europe. If the United States had reverted to its isolationist tendencies it would have eventually withdrawn most if not all of its forces from Europe and any re-introduction of American power, at a later date, would have been extremely difficult. Therefore, Greece helped provide a catalyst for the retention of an American presence and involvement in Europe. In addition, without the American commitment in Europe the balance of power would have swung in favor of the Soviet Union. No country in Europe at that time was capable of challenging Soviet power and influence without American assistance. In fact, no group of countries could have stopped Russian hegemony in the foreseeable future without support from the United States. Thus the Truman Doctrine can probably be credited with the prevention of a Soviet-forced, total communization or control of Europe.

The Truman Doctrine also had another, almost imperceptible, value. Its announcement and implementation placed the Soviets and other Marxist-Leninist, international communist movements on notice that the United States would not stand idly by and watch one country after another fall under a communist, leftist dictatorship. The Truman Doctrine clearly discouraged blatant communist adventurism and immeasurably

bolstered the hopes of those forces resisting communist subjugation. American association with the final victory against the Greek communists helped dispell any belief in the invincibility of communist forces and the inevitability of communist world domination. The Truman Doctrine encouraged anti-communist forces throughout the world and gave them the spirit to resist.

Despite all of the comments and observations, the overall historical assessment of the Truman Doctrine may prove to be fateful and ironic. Time may judge that it was the correct policy for the time, but for the wrong reasons. Its value may prove to be much greater than previously accepted. The value and meaning of the Truman Doctrine becomes even more important during a time when many pundits are heralding the death of détente and the resurrection of the Cold War.

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